

**REMARKS/ARGUMENTS**

Claims 1-7, 10-16, 20-33, 35 and 43-48 were pending. Claim 2 has been amended, claims 10, 12-16, 20-33 and 35 have been canceled, and new claims 49-55 have been added. Therefore, upon entry of this amendment, which is respectfully requested, claims 1-7, 11 and 43-55 will be pending.

Applicants thank the Examiner for the allowance of claims 43-48.

Claim 10 was objected to as being dependent on a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. Accordingly, in order to expedite allowance of claims and issuance of a Patent, independent claim 1 has been amended to include the limitations of claim 10. Claim 10 has accordingly been canceled. All claims depending from claim 1 are therefore allowable based at least on their dependency therefrom.

New dependent claims 49-55 depend from allowable claim 48 and are therefore allowable based at least on their dependency therefrom. But for the differences in the base independent claims, dependent claims 49-55 are similar in scope to dependent claims 2-7 and 11.

The remaining rejected claims have hereby been canceled so as to expedite prosecution and issuance of a Patent. Applicants reserve the right to file a continuation application to pursue the subject matter of such canceled claims and others.

**CONCLUSION**

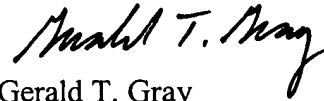
In view of the foregoing, Applicants believe all claims now pending in this Application are in condition for allowance. The issuance of a formal Notice of Allowance at an early date is respectfully requested.

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Amdt. dated January 8, 2004  
Reply to Office Action of December 10, 2003

PATENT

If the Examiner believes a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of this application, please telephone the undersigned at 925-472-5000.

Respectfully submitted,



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